

Musgrave enjoys needed time off

By Kevin Darst

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FORT MORGAN — Fresh off a Monday cross-country flight with the president on Air Force One, Rep. Marilyn Musgrave took part of what she called a much-needed break to pick up the Thanksgiving turkey.

The first-year Republican representative from Fort Morgan returned to the national spotlight last week when the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in favor of gay marriage. Musgrave introduced a bill earlier this year that would limit marriage to one woman and one man.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Loveland, introduced the bill in the U.S. Senate Tuesday.

Musgrave's marriage bill followed her initial spar with Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, over Young's proposal to raise the federal gasoline tax by a nickel. That battle sparked again as the Massachusetts ruling coincidentally unfolded.

"It's been an incredible drawing to a close to my first year in office," Musgrave said Tuesday from her home in Fort Morgan, little more than a year after voters picked her over Loveland Democrat Stan Matsunaka to represent Colorado's 4th Congressional District.

She was adamant Tuesday, as she's been since her election campaign, that an increase to the gas tax would be disastrous to her district, as well as drivers across the country, because it would most hurt low-income residents.

From day one I've dug my heels in on this one," Musgrave said. "It would be polit-

ically foolish to do and practically foolish (to raise the gas tax). The gas tax ... is the most regressive tax we have."

As alternatives to a gas tax hike, Musgrave suggested states be given more leeway to build toll roads to pay for projects or that the Davis-Bacon Act, which sets wages for workers on federal infrastructure projects, be repealed. Repealing Davis-Bacon would save as much as 37 percent on highway construction, Musgrave said. Critics of that move say it would hurt worker wages.

"The last man standing is going to win (the gas tax fight)," Musgrave said. "I don't see any way Mr. Young is going to get his way."

Musgrave has earned praise from the White House and House Republican leadership for her stand against Young and the gas tax.

She was ecstatic Tuesday to learn that Allard introduced the so-called Federal Marriage Amendment.

"God is very good to me," Musgrave said. "I'm just trying to take the stands I think are right."

Denver-based Democratic strategist Rick Ridder said Musgrave's notoriety could attract opponents, including Democrats and what he called moderate Republicans, to Musgrave's re-election race next year.

"She's positioned herself on the way right wing of the political spectrum," Ridder said. "It's a tough district for any Democrat. The question is, at what point does she get a moderate Republican challenger?"